



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
Phone 406-454-5840

April 13, 2016

Dear Interested Citizen:

Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has completed a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to construct a fish barrier on Carpenter Creek. Carpenter Creek is a tributary to Belt Creek, just downstream of Neihart that currently supports two genetically pure populations of native westslope cutthroat trout (WCT). These populations became isolated from Belt Creek when mining resulted in a stream reach incapable of supporting fish because of poor water quality. Current and future efforts to clean up the mine will have the unwanted impact of removing the current chemical barrier that isolates the native WCT from nonnatives in Belt Creek. If no actions are taken, removal of this chemical barrier will result in the loss of WCT through hybridization with rainbow trout. As such, FWP would like to construct a physical barrier to isolate the native WCT. The barrier has been designed and funding secured.

Specific questions regarding this project can be answered by the regional fisheries biologist, Jason Mullen at (406) 454-5855 or jmullen@mt.gov. The EA may be obtained by mail from Region 4 FWP, 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, 59405; by phoning 406-454-5840; by request to the regional fisheries biologist; or by viewing FWP's website <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("News", then "Public Notices", beginning April 15th). Comments may be made online on the EA webpage or may be directed by mail or email to the addresses above. Comments must be received by FWP no later than 5:00 pm on May 20, 2016.

This project is partly located on United States Forest Service (USFS) property. As such, the USFS will be hosting two open houses to discuss this project (and others). USFS and FWP personnel will be present to answer any questions regarding this project. The open houses are scheduled for the following:

- Monarch-Neihart Senior Center, Neihart, MT – Wed April 27, 5:00-7:00 p.m.
- White Sulphur Springs Ranger District Office – Tues May 17, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

As part of the decision making process under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), a ruling and Decision Notice for this EA will be made soon after the end of the comment period.

Sincerely,

Garry Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 454- 5840

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
FISHERIES BUREAU**

**Draft Environmental Assessment
Carpenter Creek Fish Barrier**

Part I. Proposed Action Description

A. Type of Proposed Action: Native species protection.

B. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:

87-1-702. Powers of department relating to fish restoration and management. The department is hereby authorized to perform such acts as may be necessary to the establishment and conduct of fish restoration and management projects as defined and authorized by the act of congress, provided every project initiated under the provisions of the act shall be under the supervision of the department, and no laws or rules or regulations shall be passed, made, or established relating to said fish restoration and management projects except they be in conformity with the laws of the state of Montana or rules promulgated by the department, and the title to all lands acquired or projects created from lands purchased or acquired by deed or gift shall vest in, be, there remain in the state of Montana and shall be operated and maintained by it in accordance with the laws of the state of Montana. The department shall have no power to accept benefits unless the fish restoration and management projects created or established shall wholly and permanently belong to the state of Montana, except as hereinafter provided.

C. Name of Project: Carpenter Creek fish barrier

D. Estimated Commencement Date: August 2016

E. Location Affected by Proposed Action: Cascade County, T14N R8E Sec 20

Latitude: 46.960817, Longitude: -110.727202

F. Project Size:

Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

1. Developed/residential—0 acres
2. Industrial—0 acres
3. Open space/woodlands/recreation—0 acres
4. Wetlands/riparian—approximately 100-125 linear feet of stream
5. Floodplain—0 acres
6. Irrigated cropland—0 acres
7. Dry cropland—0 acres
8. Forestry—0 acres
9. Rangeland—0 acres

G. Map/site plan:

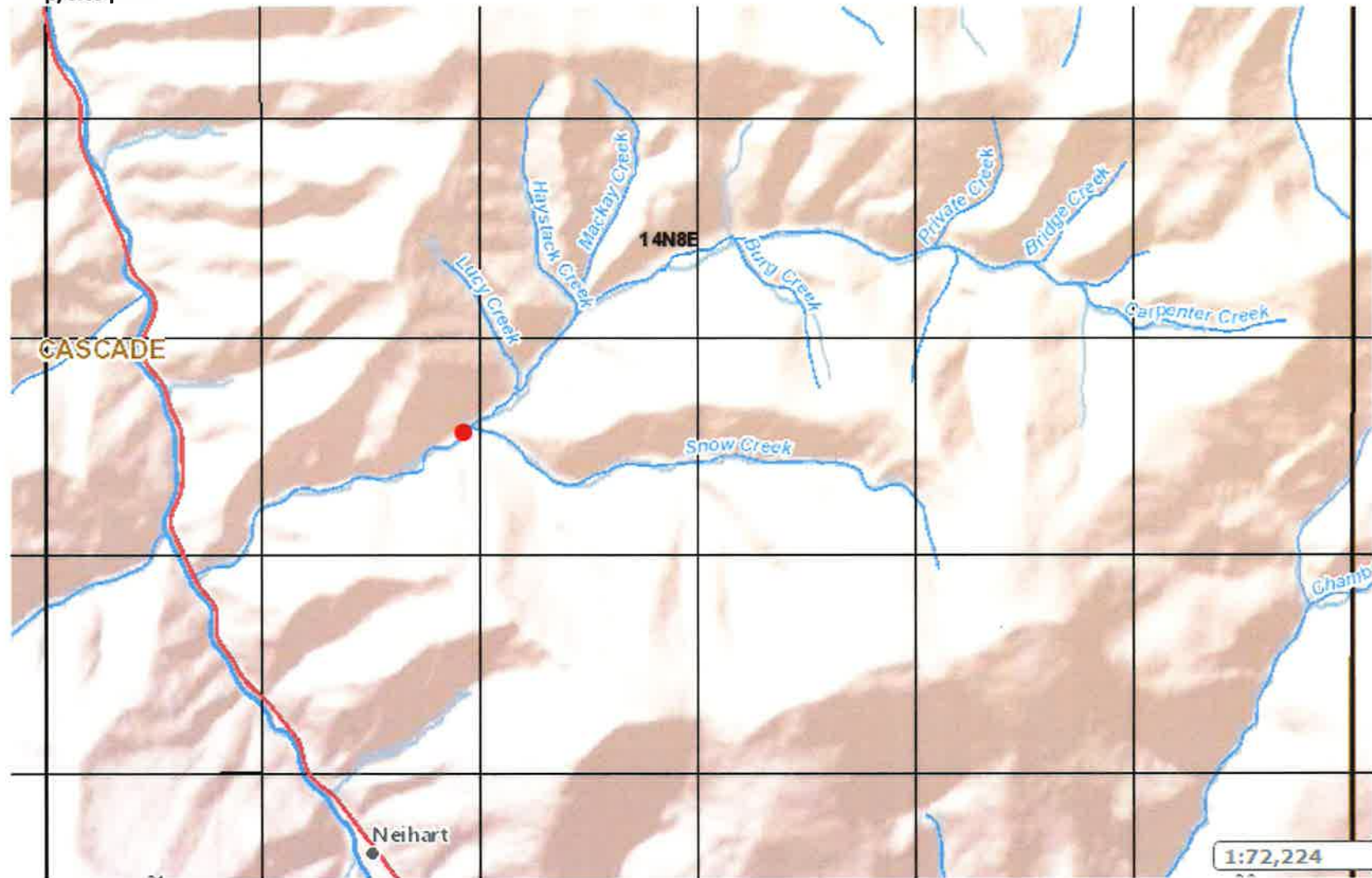


Figure 1. Map of Carpenter Creek. Barrier site indicated by red dot.

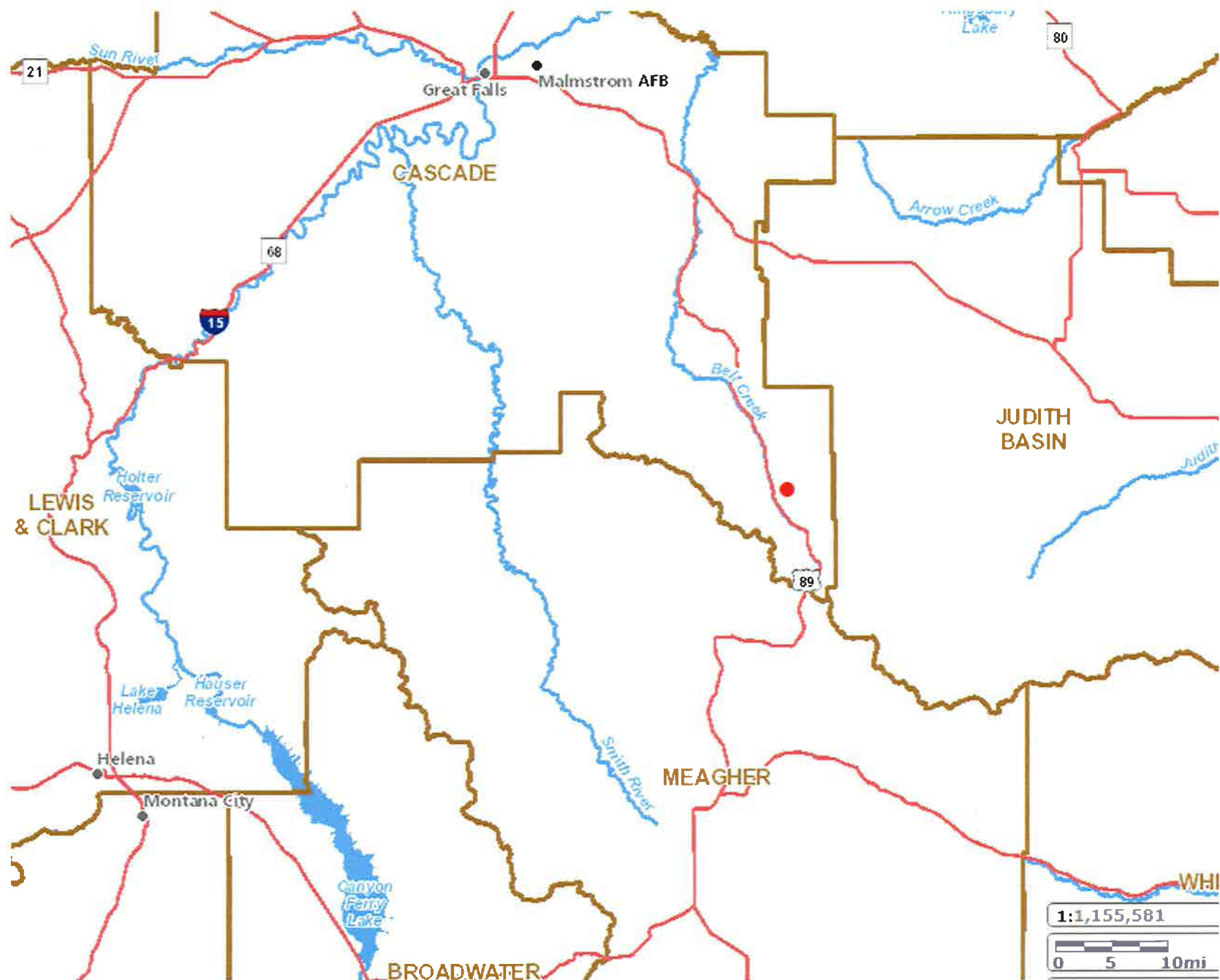


Figure 2. Map depicting general location of barrier site (red dot).

H. Listing of any other Local, State, or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

a. Permits: COE 404 permit, pending; SPA 124 permit, pending; 318 Authorization, pending

b. Funding: Northwestern Energy 2188 Mitigation Funding; FWP Future Fisheries Improvement Program, FWP Malt Europe Funding, Pat Barnes Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Missouri River Flyfishers Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Montana Trout Unlimited (pending)

I. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) are estimated to persist in less than 5% of their historical range in the Missouri River drainage. Nonnative rainbow trout hybridize with WCT when both species are present, thus reducing the genetic purity of WCT. Brook trout are capable of out-competing WCT for essential resources and have completely displaced WCT in other streams. Westslope cutthroat trout are Montana's state fish and are designated as a *Species of Special Concern* by the State of Montana, a *Sensitive Species* by the USFS, and a *Special Status Species* by the BLM.

Carpenter Creek is a small 2nd order stream that enters Belt Creek just downstream of Neihart, MT. The Carpenter Creek drainage currently supports two genetically pure populations of WCT. Mainstem Carpenter Creek contains a robust genetically pure population that occupies 1.5 miles of stream upstream of Squaw Creek. Haystack Creek is a small tributary to Carpenter Creek and supports a small (less than 20 spawning pairs) genetically pure population of WCT. Both of these populations became isolated from Belt Creek over 60 years ago when mining resulted in a stream reach incapable of supporting fish because of poor water quality, extending from Squaw Creek down to the confluence of Carpenter Creek and Belt Creek. These two populations are genetically distinct and important in terms of genetic conservation. Current and future efforts to clean up the mine will have the unwanted impact of removing the current chemical barrier that isolates the native WCT from nonnatives in Belt Creek. Removal of this chemical barrier would ultimately result in increased competition and hybridization with invading nonnatives. Monitoring efforts in 2014 and 2015 in Carpenter Creek found several rainbow trout in lower Carpenter Creek near the confluence with Belt Creek, where no fish had been observed from 2011 through 2013. Given the future loss of the chemical barrier, a plan was developed to construct a fish barrier on Carpenter Creek.

In December 2013, \$16,000 was awarded by PPL Montana (now Northwestern Energy) to hire an engineer to evaluate the best potential sites for a barrier and design the barrier. The best site location was determined to be on Forest Service and Amax Exploration, Inc property, just downstream of Snow Creek (Figure 1), and the design for the barrier was completed in February 2015. Funding to construct the barrier has been secured to ensure the genetically pure WCT populations remain isolated. Once the barrier is complete, an additional 1.6 miles of habitat would be available in Carpenter Creek for WCT (Squaw Creek to barrier site) as water quality conditions improve from mine cleanup activities. This is in addition to the 1.5 miles of stream in Carpenter Creek and the Haystack Creek populations of WCT that are already present, and would be protected by the completion of the barrier. If the barrier is not completed the WCT populations in the drainage would eventually be lost as a result of hybridization with rainbow trout.

This project is unique compared to many other barrier construction projects in that a genetically pure population currently resides upstream of the chemical barrier. As such, as long as the barrier is constructed before the chemical barrier is lost; no additional and costly restoration activities (e.g., piscicide treatments) would be needed.

Part II. Environmental Review

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X		Yes	1a
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		Yes	1d
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 1a, 1b, 1d: If the proposed action is implemented, a barrier would be constructed across the channel of Carpenter Creek. Construction activities would result in some short term increases in sediment levels; the disturbed area would be confined to the construction and staging areas (approximately 100-125 linear feet of stream). The construction area is nearby an adjacent road, but some disturbance would occur between the road and the barrier site. The project would be implemented based on conditions stipulated by permitting agencies as well as the use of Construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to reduce erosion and sedimentation and would include but may not be limited to the following measures:

- Work would occur during low flow conditions, which typically occurs late-summer or early-fall.
- Erosion control measures would be installed to control erosion and sediment release into the stream.
- Disturbed areas would be mulched and reseeded with a native plant mixture as soon as possible following construction.

Cumulative Impacts: Impacts from barrier installment would be limited to the construction period and a short recovery period. The potential short term impacts from sedimentation would be minor compared to the long term benefits provided by the isolation of native WCT. If the project performs as anticipated, little maintenance would be required. The project would be monitored following completion to determine if unexpected impacts to land resources occur.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))			X		No	2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		No	2b
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 2a and 2b: Use of heavy equipment could impact air quality and create objectionable odors during construction in the immediate area. These impacts would be limited to when equipment is operating during construction (approximately 1-3 months).

Cumulative Impacts: Impacts to the air from pollutants and odors are expected to short term and minor. Use of heavy equipment would be minimized to the extent possible and construction would occur over as short of time frame possible to minimize impacts. No cumulative impacts are anticipated.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		Yes	3a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				3b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				3c
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				

i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				
n. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 3a: There would be a temporary increase in turbidity during construction. BMPs would be in place before, during, and after construction to reduce turbidity impacts. All required permits would be obtained prior to construction, including: Montana Stream Protection Act (SPA 124), Short-Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity (318 Authorization), and Federal Clean Water Act (404) permits.

Comments 3b and 3c: The proposed action would not affect the rate or amount of surface water or flood flows; however, by design it would alter the drainage pattern by having a barrier in the stream. The barrier may create a ponding affect for a short distance upstream, but the same amount of flow would pass below the barrier as prior to construction.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed action would have a short-term effect on water quality during construction activities. Effects to water quality are expected to be localized and diminish shortly after construction. BMPs in place during construction should also minimize effects of turbidity. Overall impacts to water quality from this project are not expected to have negative effects to fisheries resources as Carpenter Creek is fishless downstream to Belt Creek, and impacts would be mitigated by the time flow reaches Belt Creek. Over the long term the project would provide beneficial impacts to fisheries resources by isolating native WCT.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 4a: During construction there would be localized impacts to vegetation for gaining access to the construction site and at the immediate construction site. Impacts to vegetation would be limited to staging areas and ground immediately adjacent to the construction site. Following construction, all disturbed areas would be mulched and reseeded with a native plant mix. Woody riparian species may also be planted to help stabilize banks.

Comment 4e: Temporary and localized disturbance to the ground during construction may create an environment conducive to noxious weed recruitment and growth. In addition, machinery and equipment used during the project may inadvertently carry noxious weeds to the project site. Proposed mitigation includes: 1) Washing all equipment and vehicles prior to work on the construction site; removal of mud, dirt, and plant parts from project equipment before moving into the project area; 2) Inspection of the project area for noxious weeds annually for three years after the project is completed. If noxious weeds are found in the project area after completion, integrated weed management methods, including bagging and appropriate disposal would be implemented. Inspections would continue for at least three years after weeds are observed.

Cumulative Impacts: Impacts to vegetation from construction of the fish barrier would be short term, minor, and limited in scope. We do not expect the proposed action would result in other actions or combine with other actions that would create negative cumulative impacts to the vegetation in Carpenter Creek.

** 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			X		Yes	5a
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?				X	No	5e
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		Yes	5g
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				
j. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 5a: During construction, water quality may temporarily decline which could have short term effects to fish (see Water, Comment 3a). However, fish are not present in Carpenter Creek below the barrier site, and changes to water quality in Belt Creek would be minimal. Implementation of BMPs and erosion control measures should make any alterations to fish habitat short term with minor to negligible

impacts. The EPA cleanup is designed to reduce threats to human health. One side effect of that would be improved water quality which would likely improve fish use of lower Carpenter Creek. Putting the barrier in place would continue this scenario. This action would not prevent fish from Belt Creek using lower Carpenter Creek, but there would be a long term prevention of fish to move upstream of this point. Fish (WCT) would be able to move downstream.

Comment 5e: The goal of the proposed action is to create a migration barrier that prevents the movement of rainbow trout and brook trout upstream to protect the WCT population above the barrier. The action would have a positive impact on WCT security and reduces a potential extinction risk (competition and hybridization with nonnatives) to WCT in the Carpenter Creek populations.

Comment 5g: During construction, noise levels in the immediate area would be elevated, which could stress resident wildlife populations resulting in dispersal from the site. Construction activities would occur during base flow conditions (late summer/early fall) after most breeding and nesting seasons and prior to most hunting seasons.

Cumulative Impacts: Impacts to fish and wildlife during construction would be short term and minor. The proposed action is not expected to result in other actions or combine with other actions that would create cumulative impacts to fish and wildlife resources of Carpenter Creek.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		No	6a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 6a: During construction there would be heavy equipment operating in the immediate area which would increase ambient noise levels. There would also be a slight increase in use of the Carpenter Creek road for mobilization of equipment.

Cumulative Impacts: Increases in noise during construction are short term and minor. The proposed action is not expected to result in other actions that would create increased noise in the riparian area, thus no cumulative impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed actions.

7. LAND USE	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comments 7a: Half of the barrier is located on private property and half on United States Forest Service (USFS) property. FWP is working with the private landowner to develop an access easement for constructing the barrier. Construction of the barrier would be contingent on developing a mutually agreeable access easement for the private landowner and FWP. The USFS supports and has agreed to construction of the barrier. The barrier would not interfere with the productivity or profitability of the area.

Cumulative Impacts: Impacts on land use would be short term and minor. The proposed action is not expected to result in other actions that would impact land use on Carpenter Creek. As such there are no cumulative impacts related to land use from the proposed project on Carpenter Creek.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 8a: During construction, BMPs will be in place to minimize the effects of accidental fuel or oil spills by construction personnel.

Cumulative Impacts: No other actions in Carpenter Creek appear to have impacts that would be cumulative in nature that would increase the risk of hazardous materials or health hazards.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		No	9e
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 9e: During mobilization and construction there would be heavy equipment operating at the construction site and movement of equipment and materials on Carpenter Creek road.

Cumulative Impacts: Community impacts are expected to be short term and minor. Any traffic hazards are expected to be short in duration and have minimal impacts to community access or use of Carpenter Creek and no other actions appear to have impacts that would be cumulative in nature.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other:						

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes	11a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 11a: Disturbance of the ground and vegetation during and immediately following construction may be aesthetically displeasing. Any areas disturbed during construction activities would be recontoured and revegetated as soon as possible following construction.

Cumulative Impacts: Impacts to aesthetics during and following construction is expected to be short term and minor. All areas disturbed by construction would be revegetated as soon as possible using native seed mix and riparian woody vegetation if deemed necessary. Impacts from the proposed action are not expected to affect recreation in Carpenter Creek. We do not foresee any other activities in the drainage that would add to impacts of the proposed action. As such there are no cumulative impacts to recreation/aesthetics from the proposed installation of the fish barrier on Carpenter Creek.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?	X					12a
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see		X				12d
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 12a and 12d: A cultural/historical survey including consideration of archaeological resources and Native American culture has not yet been completed. A full cultural/historical survey of

the site, including SHPO concurrence, would be obtained prior to construction. If cultural resources were observed, mitigation or the proposed project would be modified to minimize any impacts to these resources.

Cumulative Impacts: Since the proposed project encompasses a relatively small area and primarily occurs within the streambed, this project is not expected to affect the cultural resources of Carpenter Creek. A cultural/historical survey would be completed prior to construction. We do not foresee any other activities in the drainage that would add to impacts of the proposed action. As such there are no cumulative impacts to cultural/historical resources from the proposed installation of the fish barrier on Carpenter Creek.

C. SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						13g

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

Comment 13g: The following permits would be required for the proposed project:

SPA 124 Permit—Montana Stream Protection Act (FWP)
 318 Authorization—Short-term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity (Montana DEQ)
 404 Permit—Federal Clean Water Act (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

PART III. ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1—No Action

The no action alternative would be to not construct a fish barrier. As mine clean-up activities continue, and water quality improves, rainbow trout in Belt Creek would eventually move up Carpenter Creek and

hybridize with the currently genetically pure WCT. As a result, the objectives of the project would not be met.

Alternative 2—Proposed Action

The proposed action involves construction of a fish barrier on Carpenter Creek that would prevent nonnative trout from moving upstream into Carpenter Creek as water quality improves. The predicted benefits of Alternative 2 include:

- Protection and conservation of two genetically pure WCT populations inhabiting approximately 1.5 miles of Carpenter Creek and a small isolated population of WCT in Haystack Creek by preventing upstream colonization by rainbow trout.
- Would allow for colonization of an additional 1.5 miles of Carpenter Creek by WCT as mine cleanup activities continue and water quality improves in Carpenter Creek.
- Would allow for reconnection of the Carpenter Creek and Haystack Creek WCT populations, as water quality conditions improve.
- Reduction in the risk of potential listing of WCT under the Endangered Species Act.

PART IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION SECTION

A) Is an EIS required? No

Analysis in this environmental review demonstrates that the impacts of this proposed project would have no significant impacts on the physical, biological, or the human environment. The proposed action would provide benefits to westslope cutthroat trout in the Carpenter Creek Drainage. Therefore, an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis and an EIS would not be prepared.

B) Public Involvement.

This EA would be posted on the MFWP internet site (<http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>) and mailed directly to interested persons. Any interested citizen would be encouraged to contact MFWP and the preparer of this EA to discuss the proposal or to provide comments.

C) Duration of the comment period?

The comment period is 35 days. Public comment would be accepted through **May 20, 2016 at 5:00 PM.**

D) Name, title, address, and telephone number of the Person Responsible for Preparing the EA Document.

Jason Mullen
Fisheries Biologist
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
(406) 454-5855
jmullen@mt.gov

Date Prepared: 4/13/2016

Submit written comments to:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
R-4 Fisheries Bureau
Carpenter Creek EA Comments
4600 Giant Springs Rd
Great Falls, MT 59405